

Author E. Lynn Harris dies at 54

Written by Special to the NNPA from GIN



(NNPA) - E. Lynn Harris, the author of best-selling novels about the African-American gay community, has died at age 54, according to the Associated Press.

Publicist Laura Gilmore told AP that Harris died Thursday night, July 23, after being stricken at the Peninsula Hotel in Beverly Hills. According to reports, the cause of death had not yet been determined.

Harris self-published his first book, "Invisible Life," selling it out of his car around Atlanta. He wrote 11 novels in all, 10 of which reached the New York Times bestseller list.

"The truth is that most brothers who are attracted to men are desperately afraid of revealing it," Harris wrote in an article in Essence magazine. "Many ... fear that ... they'll be drummed out of their families, destroying their only safe haven in an already unwelcoming society."

After graduating from the University of Arkansas at Fayetteville, Harris sold computers for more than a decade before self-publishing "Invisible Life," in 1991, according to his website. The book was sold mainly through Black-owned bookstores, beauty salons and book clubs, and became a sleeper hit. A few years later it was published by Anchor Books.

His other works include "If This World Were Mine" (1997), "Not A Day Goes By" (2000), "Any Way the Wind Blows" (2001), and "A Love of My Own" (2002).

Among his awards were the Blackboard Novel of the Year for "Just As I Am," "Any Way the Wind Blows and A Love of My Own," and the James Baldwin Award for Literary Excellence for "If This World Were Mine." In recent years, he has also been named to Ebony's "Most Intriguing Blacks" list, Out Magazine's "Out 100" list and New York Magazine's "Gay Power 101" list.

In a statement published in the New York Times, Alison Rich, the executive director of publicity

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for Doubleday, which published Mr. Harris's novels, said: "We at Doubleday are deeply shocked and saddened to learn of E. Lynn Harris' death at too young an age. His pioneering novels and powerful memoir about the black gay experience touched and inspired millions of lives, and he was a gifted storyteller whose books brought delight and encouragement to readers everywhere. Lynn was a warm and generous person, beloved by friends, fans, and booksellers alike, and we mourn his passing."

The NNPA News Service contributed to this story.